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Letter dated 14 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, would like to share a summary note of the meeting held on 28 November 2016 (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Román **Oyarzun**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 14 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the follow-up meeting on Afghanistan, 28 November 2016

The meeting was attended in New York by members of the Security Council and Council members elected for 2017, as well as representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, agencies, funds, and programmes. The main briefers from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) were the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pernille Kardel, and the Director of the Human Rights Unit, Danielle Bell. They were accompanied by senior Mission staff and country representatives of United Nations entities, agencies, funds and programmes in Kabul.

The Deputy Special Representative noted the difficult security and political context in Afghanistan, drawing attention to conflict-related violence, which continues to have a devastating impact on women and girls, including restrictions on freedom of movement, the right to education, health and livelihoods. Nevertheless, improvements had been achieved in the representation of women in the past six months: the target for seats allocated to women had increased from 22 to 25 per cent and 11 women had been elected to lead within provincial councils. Furthermore, significant commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment had been made at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, held on 4 and 5 October 2016. The Deputy Special Representative concluded by outlining three key issues to focus on: the inclusion of women in peace processes with the Taliban and other groups, the involvement of women in the political process on the gender agenda and the economic empowerment of women.

The UNAMA Human Rights Unit provided an overview of the impact of the conflict on the rights of Afghan women. UNAMA continues to record instances of anti-Government elements restricting the access of women to education, health care and livelihoods, which in turn limits the participation of women in public and political spheres. The Mission also noted the impact of violent extremism on women, including incidents of anti-Government elements and pro-Government militia targeting women, including executions and lashings for moral crimes, spying or speaking out against the Government. Women human rights defenders and women in the public sphere had been subjected to attacks, intimidation and harassment.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, provided an overview of the key recommendations for the Security Council outlined in the background note, including the need for provisions on gender equality and the protection of women to be maintained in the renewal of the mandate of UNAMA and for close collaboration between the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to

resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism to ensure stronger gender analysis and information in the Committee's thematic assessments, visits and technical assistance recommendations on Afghanistan.

In response to questions from Council members, participants in New York and Kabul added the following points:

- Dialogue with the Taliban: UNAMA has discussed with the Taliban the increased number of killings of women in Taliban-controlled areas. Although the Taliban denied that that was happening, they agreed to raise the matter with senior leadership and communicate directives to commanders on the ground to prohibit killings. While the Taliban claims to fully support the rights of women in terms of access to education, marriage and freedom of movement, this is not reflected by the reality on the ground.

- Engagement with religious leaders: UN-Women has supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs in engaging religious leaders in advocacy for the registration of marriages. Recently, a UN-Women HeForShe champion requested that the Ulema Council of Afghanistan issue a fatwa on the prohibition of the cultural practice of settling disputes by trading a young virgin girl.

- Rule of law and the justice sector: There have been improvements in the representation of women in the justice sector, despite the failure to appoint the President's first female Supreme Court judge nomination, Aneesa Rasuli. Instead, she was appointed chief judge of the national anti-corruption court, established by the President. Currently, five deputy attorney generals are women. The revised criminal procedure code contains improved language, thanks to advocacy by UNAMA during the four-year revision process, including a gender-neutral definition of rape, the concept of consent in the definition of the use of force and the prohibition of the prosecution of a victim if rape is not proved.

- Security sector: The Afghan National Police and the Ministry of Interior Affairs have continued to conduct training in the past six months, including the training of 250 women at the cadet level in Turkey. Efforts have also been focused on establishing protective measures to reduce threats to women serving and to women examining and implementing measures to increase police service to women in the community. The United Nations Development Programme is working with the UNAMA Human Rights Unit in due diligence risk assessment and operating procedures, prioritizing the protection and safety of women police officers. UNAMA has also been working with the Women's Advisory Security Committee to discuss initiatives and actions to promote and protect Afghan national women police officers.

The co-chairs thanked UNAMA for sharing detailed information with the Council through the Informal Expert Group and encouraged UNAMA to incorporate issues related to women and peace and security into the forthcoming briefing to the Security Council and the report of the Secretary-General. The co-chairs stated that the Informal Expert Group would follow up on Afghanistan again in a meeting in 2017.